DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 451 995 RC 022 932

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TITLE	Constructing Knowledge and Training Curricula about Early Childhood Care and Development in Canadian Aboriginal Communities.
PUB DATE	2001-04-12
NOTE	41p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (Seattle, WA, April 12, 2001)
PUB TYPE	Reports - Evaluative (142) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*American Indian Education; *Canada Natives; *College Programs; *Culturally Relevant Education; *Curriculum Development; Early Childhood Education; Foreign Countries; Higher Education; Outcomes of Education; Partnerships in Education; Program Evaluation; Reservation American Indians; *School Community Programs; Tribally Controlled Education
IDENTIFIERS	Canada; Intergenerational Transmission

ABSTRACT

The Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) (Saskatchewan) and the University of Victoria (British Columbia) developed a bicultural postsecondary training curriculum in early childhood care and development that incorporated both Euro-Western and Aboriginal knowledge. Since the MLTC sought curricula using representative Cree and Dene cultures rather than generic pan-Aboriginal culture, seven groups of Aboriginal communities partnered with the university to co-construct a 2-year curriculum delivered entirely in their communities. Tribal elders played key roles in developing the curriculum. A steering committee in each community had responsibility to raise funds; recruit instructors, students, elders, and practicum supervisors; and provide facilities and supports for teaching and learning. Four of the community groups were able to recruit Native American instructors. A 2-year evaluation using interviews, questionnaires, focus groups, participant observations, community forums, and record reviews was completed in 2000. Positive program impacts included unprecedented high rates of Aboriginal student retention, program completion, leadership, and application of training to relevant vocations within their communities; revitalization of intergenerational relationships through tribal elders' involvement in curriculum construction, teaching, and learning; enhanced community cohesion; and reinforcement of valued cultural concepts and practices. (Contains 37 references.) (TD)

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RC 022 932

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Division 1 (Education in the Professions), Seattle, April 12, 2001.
Information about the Generative Curriculum Model and the First Nations Partnership Programs is available at ***www.fnpp.org.***

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Constructing knowledge and training curricula about early childhood care and development in Canadian Aboriginal communities

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Abstract

The effectiveness of an innovative 'Generative Curriculum Model' was demonstrated in seven partnership programs involving rural aboriginal communities and a team based at the University of Victoria. A constructivist model of curriculum design and teaching by Elders ensured cultural relevance of the training curricula in child and youth care and subsequent transfer of training to development of community services by program graduates. Seventy-eight per cent of the First Nations enrolees completed the two-year diploma program. Implications of the program evaluation findings for advancing the decolonization of post-secondary education and the utility of education as a tool for aboriginal community development are discussed.

Constructing knowledge and training curricula about early childhood care and development in Canadian Aboriginal communities

Curricula embody and reproduce cultural goals and methods for fostering student development and subsequent transfer of training to vocational pursuits. Post-secondary education intended to provide professional training reflects and engenders the culturally conditioned values and practices of those who design and deliver the curricula. Many aboriginal students and community representatives in North America and elsewhere have expressed concern about the lack of representation of their values and methods in both the process and the outcomes of learning at all levels of education. Their concerns are essentially twofold: (1) mainstream, Euro-Western educational approaches often do not fit the learning styles, interests, or needs of aboriginal students, resulting in high drop-out, high costs, decreasing self-esteem, and low capacity for self-sufficiency in aboriginal communities; (2) the predominantly Euro-Western derivation of most of what is taught in mainstream educational institutions perpetuates the colonial, assimilationist effects of education upon marginalized populations including aboriginal students. These concerns have been elaborated by many aboriginal educators (Archibald, 1995; Armstrong, Kennedy & Oberle, 1990; Barber, 1986; Battiste, 1997; Kirkness, 1986; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Leavitt, 1995; Lockhart, 1982; Mackay & Myles, 1995; Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1996). They will be briefly explored below, since they provide an important part of the rationale for the education innovation which was the focus of the present program evaluation research.

A key principle guiding the innovation described in this report, and confirmed by the evaluation, is that that the decolonialization of education towards practices that are inclusive of disenfranchised or marginalized cultural populations begins with acceptance of a desire on the part of these groups to participate meaningfully and centrally in the design, implementation, and evaluation of curricula (Evans, McDonald, & Nyce, 1999; Haig-Brown, 1995). The need for a participatory approach will be discussed as a preamble to discussion of the program innovation, and we will return to this key principle in discussion of implications for future program initiatives.

Aboriginal history of disappointments with education and training.

All of the aboriginal groups that participated in the innovative education program evaluated in the present study had made many previous attempts to build professional capacity among community members through education and training. Like the experiences of many aboriginal people, they had found neither cultural relevance in training curricula nor cultural safety on mainstream campuses. It is widely recognized among educators in Canada and the United States that aboriginal students who attend mainstream post-secondary education most often encounter exceptional barriers to success. Barriers range from overt racism to latent forms of discrediting, insensitivity or disregarding the forms and substance of knowledge residing within aboriginal historical

and contemporary cultural institutions. Low academic completion rates signal the need for enhanced efforts to design and deliver programs that effectively overcome these barriers.

In Canada, although the number of aboriginal students enrolled in post-secondary programs has increased since the 1960's, when the participation rate was negligible (Archibald & Bowman, 1995), aboriginal peoples remain significantly under-represented at Canadian universities and colleges (Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996). Aboriginal people in Canada are seven times less likely to graduate from university as are members of the general population (Armstrong, Kennedy, & Oberle, 1990). In spite of efforts to improve aboriginal participation, for the most part, Canadian universities do not yet provide the social climate, curricula, geographic accessibility, and entrance criteria needed to attract, retain, and support the success of aboriginal students (Barber, 1986; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Archibald & Bowman, 1995).

Some mainstream programs have attempted to become 'culturally sensitive' or 'culturally inclusive' by introducing pan-aboriginal curriculum content, including for example, boxed text or selected readings about Haida, Lakhota, Navajo, or Ojibway beliefs, lifestyles, or conditions. These efforts are regarded by many aboriginal people in Canada as conceptually flawed, in part because they fail to recognize the heterogeneity of over 600 separate First Nations, Inuit, Aleut, and Metis cultural groups, each with their own traditional language and culture, service needs and development goals.

A growing number of post-secondary institutions in Canada and the United States have initiated satellite and extension programs delivered off-campus, in aboriginal communities. In Canada, the Assembly of First Nations has strongly encouraged this trend (Charleston, 1988). Community-based programs have been seen to have several advantages, including keeping students close to their natural social support networks and reducing the strain on the student's family, thus promoting student retention (Friesen, 1986). When a program is visible to the community and the community has some responsibility in overseeing the practicalities of student participation in a program delivered locally, there is greater likelihood of support for students (Knowles, 1980). Community-based training programs can be effective in addressing important social issues as well as meeting educational needs (Calliou, 1995; Kirkness, 1986).

Unfortunately, most community-based programs do not actively seek to address the community's self-identified development goals, and do not actively involve the community in key roles with regard to curriculum content and delivery. They therefore fail to respond significantly to the concerns among aboriginal people: these programs typically offer the same programs of training offered at on-campus centres, consisting overwhelmingly of content representing a Euro-Western based canon and teaching methods that have been found to be effective with predominantly white, middle class student populations. Making a program geographically accessible does nothing, in

itself, to increase the resonance and applicability of professional training to the culture, rural circumstances, socio-economic conditions, unique goals, and resources of aboriginal communities, unless the program is reconceptualized to respond to these needs and conditions (Ball & Pence, 2000).

There is increasing recognition that for many aboriginal students, there is neither intrinsic nor extrinsic motivation to learn the content or to engage in the types of learning activities found in mainstream post-secondary programs (Wilson, 1994). The Assembly of First Nations in Canada has called for post-secondary curricula and pedagogy that are relevant to First Nations people, particularly in areas where there are cultural considerations such as communication and learning styles, and culture-specific content (Charleston, 1988). Many educators have similarly argued that curricula need to incorporate traditional First Nations philosophies and practices (Brokenleg, 1990; Brant, 1990; Gillis, 1992; Hesch, 1995) and should incorporate aboriginal languages (Calliou, 1993; Armstrong, 1987; Leavitt, 1995). Lockhart (1982) has drawn attention to the connections between culturally-grounded curricula, community involvement, and the purpose of education to further community development goals: "It is critically important that process models are developed that ensure equity between 'insider' and 'outsider' knowledge frames; that these processes involve the whole community in acquiring a sense of 'ownership'...and local community-based criteria are utilized in 'social impact' and 'economic feasibility' assessment" (Lockhart, 1982, p. 160).

Some educators have reported experiences of community-based post-secondary programs that have effectively served aboriginal students by actively collaborating with members of the community where the program is delivered (Ignace, 1996; Evans, McDonald, & Nyce, 1999; Lockhart, 1982; Wright, 1991). Delivery of programs in communities where students originate has the potential of enabling contributions from community members on curriculum content decisions and the logistics of program delivery (Friesen, 1986; Knowles, 1980). Going beyond community participation, some First Nations scholars have identified community control over decision about program content and delivery making as a crucial factor in making education and training as a means to social and cultural reconstruction (Calliou, 1995; Kirkness, 1986).

As part of this approach, the role of aboriginal Elders in facilitating education and training has been recognized in some programs. Grant (1995) and Sterling (1995) have reported that Elders can support post-secondary programs by sharing indigenous knowledge, reinforcing indigenous ways of teaching and learning, and mentoring students. Kirkness (1987) has emphasized the need to elevate the role of Elders beyond the telling of stories or prayers, to places of central importance in the teaching and learning process.

Introduction of an innovative approach: First Nations Partnership Programs

A proactive response to the paucity of culturally responsive post-secondary was initiated in Canada in 1989 by the Meadow Lake Tribal Council (MLTC) in Saskatchewan, Canada. Identifying as a top priority the training of community members in early childhood care and development, they proposed a partnership with the second author, based at the University of Victoria, aimed at co-constructing a bicultural training curriculum. They sought training which would "enable our community members to walk in both worlds" (MLTC Administrator) – to work both on and off reserve and in native and non-native settings (Pence & Ball, 1999). Thus, they aimed for a curriculum that would place both Euro-Western knowledge and cultural knowledge residing in their constituent Cree and Dene communities at the core of the curriculum and the teaching and learning process. Pointing out the heterogeneity of cultures and traditional languages among over 500 aboriginal tribal communities in Canada, the MLTC sought post-secondary curricula that incorporated their particular culture, rather than a melting pot of aboriginal lore that would result from construction of a pan-aboriginal curriculum. Because of this emphasis on the cultural particularities of each partnering community and the desire for community involvement in each program iteration, no two programs and no two resulting curricula were identical, although the principles of the process were consistent across programs.

The innovative partnership approach that evolved through the community-university partnership started with the assumption that culturally valued and useful knowledge about childhood and child care was embedded within the community and that this knowledge needed to be afforded a central place in the development of training curricula. At the same time, the community partners assumed that there was value in considering the perspectives and knowledge yielded by Euro-Western research, theory and professional experience. This biculturally respectful stance laid the foundation for a 'community of learners' to become engaged in co-constructing culturally grounded training curricula that combined, in the words on one MLTC representative, "the best of both worlds." This innovative approach became known as the 'Generative Curriculum Model" (Ball & Pence, 2000).

By 1999, seven groups of aboriginal communities in rural areas of Canada, comprising a total of 47 separate bands or First Nations villages, had partnered with the presenters at the University of Victoria to co-construct and deliver a two year post-secondary training curriculum on early childhood care and development. The common goal of the aboriginal communities when they each separately initiated the partnership program was to strengthen capacity among community members to create and operate early childhood education programs in their communities that were congruent with their culturally-based goals and strategies for supporting children's development and that were appropriate to their geographic, economic, and social conditions.
Community representatives reported that previous experiences with mainstream post-secondary curricula based on Euro-Western constructions of childhood and 'developmentally appropriate' child care had failed to represent the realities and goals of families in their communities. Mainstream training programs had also yielded low rates

of retention and completion among students in all of these communities, reflecting a general trend in native education in North America (Ball, Pence, Pierre, & Kuehne, in press).

The partnership programs were delivered entirely within each of the seven aboriginal communities on federal reserve lands. Community-based delivery enabled community members to play active roles, not only as students, but also as discussants, supporters, and 'adjunct instructors' involved in transmission and reconstruction of cultural knowledge throughout program planning, delivery, and evaluation. As noted earlier (Freisen, 1986; Knowles, 1980), delivery in the community also provided students with undisrupted access to social supports during their two years of coursework and practica (Ball & Nicholson, 1999). A steering committee was formed in each community that had responsibility to raise program funding, to recruit instructors, students, participating elders, and practica supervisors from within or near the community, and to provide facilities and supports for teaching and learning.

Co-constructing Curriculum with Cultural Communities.

The pivotal process that generated curriculum could be termed 'dialogical constructivism.' The precise content of each training program was purposefully indeterminate to allow for co-construction of curriculum that had cultural relevance and resonance for the particular partners. Partnerships did not start with a blank slate, but instructors and students were also not encouraged to adopt wholesale the scripted materials and resources provided by the university-based team. Students and community members engaged in ongoing dialogue and debate about mainstream, 'provided' theoretical conceptualizations, research, and early childhood education program models offered by a university-based curriculum team. They were encouraged both to consider the provided curriculum, and to go beyond it. Students, Elders and instructors critiqued it, contributed to it, and reconceptualized it from their own cultural vantage points.

This university-based curriculum content was considered alongside community-generated, often culturally-specific perspectives on the topics studied in each of 20 undergraduate university courses. No texts existed that could provide community-specific information, and few texts or materials provided culturally-specific information, so the initial design of the Generative Curriculum Model was not seen as radical, but rather as necessary.

Among participants in the program, tribal elders played key roles in the conveying and helping to re-create culturally grounded concepts and approaches to child development, care, and education. Elders also introduced and modelled traditional modes of teaching and learning. Rapport and cooperative teaching and learning among Elders, instructors, and students were facilitated by an intergenerational facilitator in each of the partnership programs. In the partnership programs, community members developed practical knowledge, skills, and models for early childhood education through debate and dialogical construction of useful, culturally 'fitting' concepts and practices.

Education career ladder.

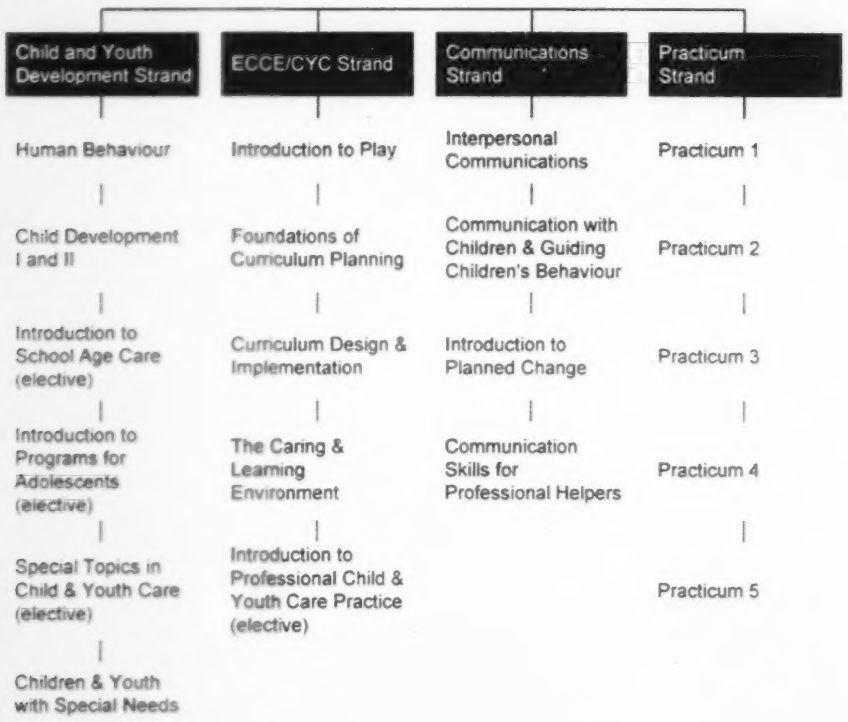
Career laddering in the First Nations Partnership Programs enables students to "step off" the program of study after one year, with a certificate in Early Childhood Education, or after two years, with a diploma in Child and Youth Care. In Canada, these credentials enable them to pursue employment in a range of human service fields including: child care, learning assistance, supportive care for special needs, respite, recreation, and health services coordination. If they choose, students can "step on" the career ladder again, continuing third and fourth-year studies, either through distance education or on-campus courses, leading to a degree in Child and Youth Care.

The diploma program in Child and Youth Care that was created for the partnership programs involves five terms of full time study spanning approximately two years. The program consists of 20 courses, including 5 practica courses, plus one university accredited English courses, and child safe first aid. Courses address four themes:

(1) ECCE/CYC (Early Childhood Care and Education / Child and Youth Care)
(2) Communications
(3) Child and Youth Development
(4) Practica

Table 1 shows the courses within each theme area.

Table 1.
Generative curriculum in early childhood care and development


Child and Youth Development Strand
ECCE/CYC Strand
Communications Strand
Practicum Strand
Human Behaviour
Child Development I and II
Introduction to School Age Care (elective)
Introduction to Programs for Adolescents (elective)
Special Topics in Child & Youth Care (elective)
Children & Youth with Special Needs
Introduction to Play
Foundations of Curriculum Planning
Curriculum Design & Implementation
The Caring & Learning Environment
Introduction to Professional Child & Youth Care Practice (elective)
Interpersonal Communications
Communication with Children & Guiding Children's Behaviour
Introduction to Planned Change
Communication Skills for Professional Helpers
Practicum 1
Practicum 2
Practicum 3
Practicum 4
Practicum 5

The focus of the remainder of this report will be on the method, findings, and implications of a comprehensive program of research, conducted by the authors and representatives of the partner communities from 1998 to 2000, in which the process and outcomes of this unique training program model across the seven communities were evaluated.

Program Evaluation Method

Over a two-year period from 1998-2000, data were gathered and analysed to capture the experiences of representative groups of people involved in each of the partnership programs between 1989 and 1999. A multimethod, social participatory research design was used, including both a longitudinal perspective and cross-sectional comparisons across seven partnering communities. Each partner community contributed questions that would yield feedback of interest to their agenda. Collaborators were recruited from each community to participate in aspects of data collection, analysis, community feedback sessions, and reporting. Extensive commentary was invited from a broad spectrum of community members who had been involved in and/or affected by the program.

This evaluation also included comparisons between the First Nations Partnership Programs and human service programs at other post-secondary institutions where First Nations students were enrolled. These cross-program comparison procedures and findings will be reported elsewhere. Table 2 shows the groups of participants in the program evaluation.

Table 2. Program evaluation participants.

103	graduates
4	early program leavers
19	instructors
38	Elders
4	Intergenerational Coordinators
3	student spouses
23	partnering community administrators
11	partnering post-secondary institution administrators
12	practicum supervisors
7	funding agency representatives
19	comparison program instructors & administrators
4	comparison program First Nations students

Procedures.

The impacts of the training program across groups of program participants were assessed using an ecologically comprehensive research methodology that combined qualitative and quantitative data collection and analysis strategies, including:

(a) Semi-structured individual and group interviews;
(b) Structured questionnaires;
(c) Focus groups of program administrators;
(d) Participant observations in partnering communities and post-secondary institutions;
(e) Community forums;
(f) Two forums bringing together professionals involved in training Early Childhood Education in rural First Nations;
(g) Review of records of seven partnership programs.

Analysis of interview and questionnaire data.

Qualitative data analysis. A six-member research team employed a content analysis procedure pioneered by Glaser & Strauss (1970; Glaser, 1992). The 'constant comparative method' was used to reconstruct basic social processes described by respondents to account for their experiences of the program and its impacts. The recurrence of descriptive statements across participants' transcribed interviews led to the identification of key themes about program processes and program outcomes. After several interpretive iterations, a reliable coding scheme was derived for enumerating these themes. In the interviews, participants offered explanations about why the program had various effects. Commonalities across participants' interviews in the explanations they offered led to the formulation of hypothetical causal linkages between certain 'enabling conditions' and program outcomes. These causal linkages were inventorized by the research team and subsequently were elaborated in the form of 'theoretical memos', key inter-relationships among core constructs embedded in the respondents' accounts. Interpretations of qualitative data were carried back to partnering communities for feedback, revision, and elaboration. Table 3 shows the iterative process of data collection and analysis following a grounded theory building method.

Table 3.
Iterative data collection and analysis strategies.

PHASE 1 DATA COLLECTION Individual participant interviews.	➤	PHASE 1 DATA ANALYSIS Derivation of tentative hypotheses about causal links between pre-conditions, processes and outcomes. Design of questionnaires and 'confirmatory' interviews and forum strategies based on analysis of transcribed accounts.
PHASE 2 DATA COLLECTION Questionnaires Confirmatory interviews and group forums. Record review. Discussion of tentative findings and eliciting community input.	➤	PHASE 2 DATA ANALYSIS Statistical analysis of quantitative data. Formulation of conceptual framework grounded in analysis of accounts and quantitative data.

This report focuses on key findings of analysis of transcribed participants' interviews evaluating their program experiences. The findings reported here are those for which there was high agreement among five data analysts who coded key themes and identified causal linkages in participants' accounts about the program (reliabilities ranged from .78 to .97 using Cronbach's alpha).

Quantitative data analysis. Frequency analyses of educational, vocational, and community outcomes yielded descriptive information about program impacts. Because nearly all participants gave overwhelmingly high ratings across questionnaire dimensions, statistical analysis of questionnaire data yielded few insights about the correlation of specific program elements to specific program outcomes.

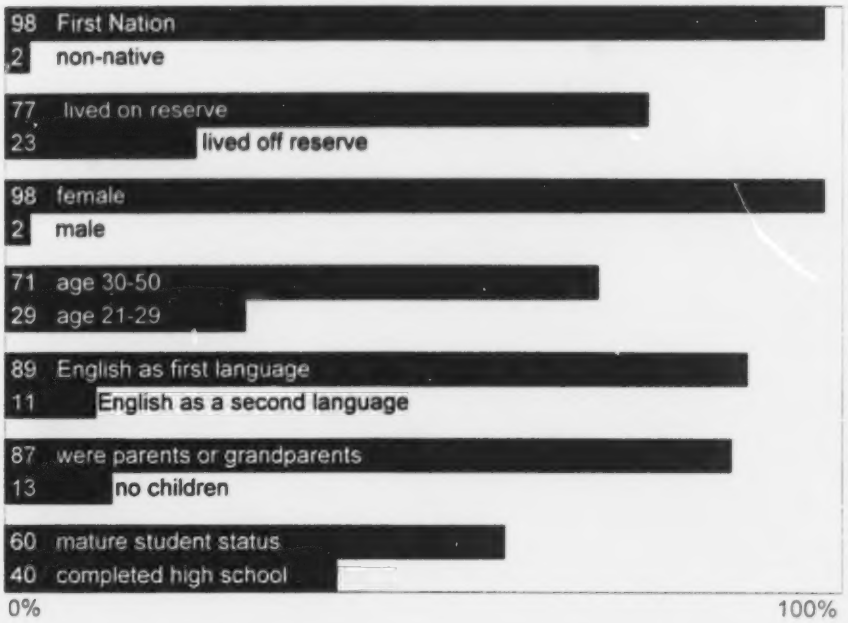
The evaluation yielded descriptive findings about partnering and program delivery in each community. These findings are presented first, including participants' recommendations about aspects of the First Nations Partnership Programs that could be improved. The evaluation also yielded descriptive and quantitative findings about outcomes for individuals and for the partnering communities and institutions overall. These are presented next. Finally, the evaluation yielded a conceptual framework, suggested in participants' accounts of why the program worked to generate enhanced capacity. Their understandings pointed to the importance of certain enabling conditions that created a socially inclusive, culturally safe 'ecology' in which the program and the student cohort could become nested, and in which the co-construction of a bicultural curriculum could flourish. The framework of enabling conditions is presented last in this section. This report provides a brief overview of key findings. More detailed reports on various aspects of the partnership programs, the evaluation research framework, and evaluation findings will be reported subsequently.

Results

Program descriptive information.

Students. A total of 118 community members enrolled in the partnership programs across seven communities: 102 of these students were involved for one or more years of study. Table 4 shows provides a profile of community members who enroled in the programs across seven partnerships.

Table 4. Student characteristics.



A special, 'mature student' admissions procedure was arranged with each partnering post-secondary institution in which flexible prior learning criteria were used and students were admitted as a cohort. Across partnership programs, the cohorts ranged from 10 to 22 students. Students were between 21 and 50 years of age. The average time since they had been in full-time studies, typically at the secondary school level, was 11 years. A few had been out of school for as long as 25 years, while two had graduated from high school just three years before enrolling in the program.

The First Nations communities conducted their own screening and preparatory programs for students, based on locally established criteria and assessment procedures. Common student selection criteria included:

(a) A level of academic preparedness that suggested high probability of program completion;
(b) Fluency in written and spoken English;
(c) Personal health and stability;
(d) Positive relationships with children through work and/or family;
(e) Strong interest in Early Childhood Care and Development as a career.

Student candidates were reviewed and admitted by the university as a cohort. Forty per cent had completed secondary school. The remainder were admitted on a 'mature student' status, based on being assessed as having a high probability of success in the two-year program given their prior education, work experience, personal characteristics, and pre-program preparatory work.

Instructors. A total of 20 instructors were involved across the seven partnership programs. Qualified instructors were recruited and contracted by each partnering First Nations community. Instructors were then approved by the academic institution. Four of the seven partnerships had at least one First Nations course instructor; Mount Currie First Nation had the exceptional capacity to recruit instructors exclusively from their own community. While some communities would have preferred to have more First Nations instructors, there is a shortage of available, qualified First Nations educators in all professional training areas in Western Canada. Some instructors were recruited from within the vicinity of the community, while others were recruited from further away (e.g., one instructor was recruited from Quebec to B.C. through a nation-wide First Nations newspaper). Relocation costs were an additional expense borne by communities. In each partnership program at least one instructor was a certified specialist in Early Childhood Education.

The program required the equivalent of two full-time instructors over five terms. Often three or more people taught different course strands or subject areas. Retention of instructors who relocated to the partner community was a serious challenge in the two most remote partnerships. Instructors emphasized several needed supports:

(a) Program of orientation to community conditions and cultural forms interaction
(b) Formal introductions to key community members, especially Elders, band chief and council members, and other educators involved in the community (e.g., staff of independent schools on reserve, tutors involved in Open University course delivery)
(c) Financial incentives including relocation and transportation allowances
(d) Ongoing communication and supports from the university as well as the community, for both academic purposes and morale.

Elders. Elders were recruited from communities represented by members of the student cohort. Most community partners recruited an 'Intergenerational Facilitator' who asked Elders to participate in the program. Elders joined in the teaching process either in the classroom setting or by allowing students to visit them in their homes to discuss topics that were part of each course. Across the seven programs, the number of Elders who participated ranged from 3 to 40. Each community had a slightly different way of identifying who was an Elder. Generally, Elders were older adults who had demonstrated to community members that they had knowledge and a wise perspective on the cultural identity and history of the community.

Community-based administrators. On average, a core group of approximately five community members emerged early in each partnership to move into place the elements that were needed to enable program delivery. This steering committee typically responded to input and feedback from a larger group within the community, such as an education society, daycare society, employment and training board, or Band chief and councillors. Each community had one or two individuals who were the primary liaisons with a university-based liaison. Throughout all partnership phases, the relationship between primary liaisons was crucial. In the evaluation, these individuals emphasized the need for mutual respect, patience, tolerance of shortcomings, and constructive responsiveness to both positive and negative feedback.

Practicum supervisors. The community identified suitable, accessible practicum sites for students to develop applied competencies. Practicum supervisors at these sites were recruited by First Nations community administrators. The supervisors were important not only because successful practica were required by government in order to quality for certification in Early Childhood Education, but also because the students depended upon them to provide a non-discriminatory, safe atmosphere for developing new skills. Practicum supervisors ranged in their receptivity to distinctive cultural viewpoints and approaches that the First Nations students often brought to the practicum setting. More than half of the students depicted their own previous experiences as young children in formal education settings as very destructive of their concept of themselves as worthy and capable learners. They recalled many incidents involving racism. In the evaluation, program graduates often described the role of the practicum supervisors as pivotal in their ability to cope emotionally and function effectively as trainees.

Institution-based team members. The University of Victoria team generally consisted of three part-time staff. Most staff were involved in curriculum writing, revision, updating and resourcing. One specific role was liaison with the community. One team member undertook administrative requirements such as student registrations, submission of grades, requests for academic concessions, and communications required to maintain operations. Table 5 shows the roles and responsibilities of the university and community partners.

Table 5. Partnership roles and responsibilities.

University of Victoria	First Nations Communities
- Ensure academic accreditation (course work and education career ladder) - Liaison with program administrators ("point of entry" for third partner) - Appoint instructors - Register student cohort - Provide curriculum resource using Generative Curriculum Model - Co-construct bicultural ECCD curriculum - Design & conduct program evaluation - Prepare and disseminate information on partnership programs	- Initiate partnership based on needs and objectives of community members - Secure program funding - Administer preparatory programs and full training program - Recruit student cohort and instructors - Employ instructors and intergenerational facilitator - Co-construct bicultural ECCD curriculum - Deliver program (classroom/ practica) - Provide ongoing supports for students - Participate in documentation/evaluation

Program implementation

The program implementation phase ranged from 19 to 42 months. Variability depended upon the expressed needs of the community partner. In the shortest program, with Treaty 8 Tribal Association, students were in class longer each day and took fewer, shorter breaks between terms. This approach to program implementation was motivated by the uncertainty of continued funding, and the fact that students had moved away from their villages, and sometimes their families, into a nearby town. They were eager to return home. The longest program was with Tl'azt'en Nation, where students began the program gradually, combining a reduced course load with ongoing preparatory work in basic academic and study skills and personal life skills. Subsequently, when students were ready to assume a full course load, a series of tragic events necessitated several temporary cessations of the program. During this program, every student experienced the death of one or more relatives. The pace of the partnership program at Tl'azt'en Nation was also affected by frequent instructor turnovers, and the difficulty of recruiting replacements to work in this isolated and challenging setting.

Another factor that sometimes affected the pace of program activities was the difficulty that students' husbands had with their wives being fully occupied outside the home and with the prospect of their becoming more confident, independent, and employed. Finally, because many families depended upon seasonal hunting, fishing, and berry picking, the program accommodated time off for students to pursue these important sustenance activities.

Post-program follow-up phase

No partnership ended on the day delivery of all the courses was completed. In order to support students to successfully complete all the program requirements for the

diploma, the partnership continued actively throughout a post-program phase ranging from six to twelve months. Across partnerships, an average of 70% of the students had small but necessary steps in the program to complete, typically involving a final round of supervised practicum training or final assignments for one or two courses.

The most prevalent challenge to completion of the full diploma program was the required university-level English course which communities accessed through local colleges or through Open University distance education. A majority of community-based program administrators affirmed the value of students becoming more proficient in writing, reading, and speaking. However, students reported low confidence in their own ability to succeed in a university English course and a mismatch between their perceived needs as practitioners and the content and teaching model of the English courses that were available to them. Participants recommended development of a new English course that would be: (a) taught on site; (b) sensitive to First Nations needs and encompassing positive First Nations literature; and (c) tailored to the communication task demands of practitioners in early childhood and youth services.

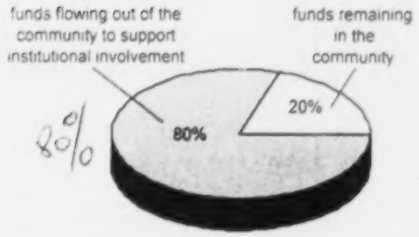
Costs.

Average costs per student ranged from $4,000 to $5,000 per term, which was slightly higher than the full cost per student in other post-secondary programs providing training in Early Childhood Education. The program was more cost-effective when there were more students in the cohort. However, costs varied considerably across programs due to other factors as well, especially transportation requirements and availability of community resource people to serve in instructor roles. For example, the two programs that had the highest cost were the most remote.

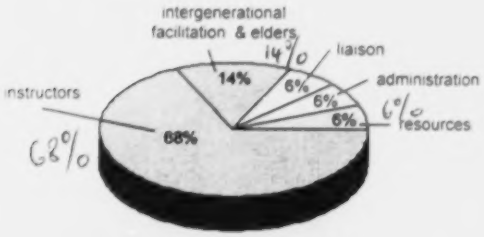
In each partnership, at least 80% of the expenditures for the program remained within the community. The communities delivered the program in their own facilities, provided their own administrative and support services, and contracted with instructors who were either community members or were recruited to the community for the duration of the program. Approximately 20% of the costs were for: institutional liaison and support; provision of the university-based curriculum materials that were combined with community-generated course content; registration and recording of students' progress in the program as required for credentialing; pre-program and post-program liaison costs. Table 6 shows the distribution of funds across partners and program components.

Table 6. Funding allocations.

Distribution of Funds

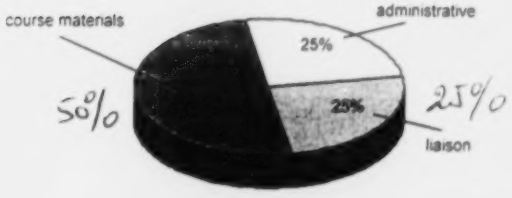


Typical Allocation of Community Expenditures



Note: On the community side, there were variable amounts of student travel and accommodation for practica, student support, and facilities

Typical Allocation of Institution-Based Expenditures



Note: On the institution side, there were variable amounts for liaison travel.

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Funding challenges.

The partner communities raised all of the funding both for community-based program implementation and for institution-based program support. While this contributed to the community's sense of agency and control in the partnership, and their pride in successful implementation, it also placed an inordinate financial burden on them and accounted for the relatively high overall cost per student per term. The most serious challenge for the partnerships was the absence of a base of operational funds, independent of funds raised by the community, to support the involvement of the university-based team. The institution-based team required funding for development of new course materials, updating existing curriculum, travel to communities, liaison, and participation in community-initiated fund raising activities.

A challenge for both the institution-based team and the partner communities was a lack of funding to support involvement during the critical pre-program period and during post-program follow-up. In Canada, funding for education and training is typically tied specifically to the period when courses are being delivered. Also, funding is often based on a narrow conception of what is involved in education and training. Thus, several of the community partners had particular difficulty obtaining sufficient external funds to support Elder involvement; the Intergenerational Facilitator's role; students' travel to and from practica; and community events to elicit broad social participation in the program. For the institutional partners, inadequate funding seriously curtailed the capacity to reach out to prospective community partners; to travel to communities; to build relationships in communities; to support community efforts to mobilize resources; and to help create conditions that would enable program delivery.

Cost-benefit perspective.

Evaluation participants underscored the benefits of the partnership program to the community as a whole. Most participants contrasted this investment in education and training with other training and employment programs that have benefited students themselves but have had little or no impact on other community members. Distinctive features of the First Nations Partnership Programs that they pointed to were: (a) the unprecedented high rates of student retention and completion; (b) the application of relevant training to community service development; and (c) the far reaching ripple effects of the partnership programs.

All the community-based administrators described in the interviews how they had considered both social and economic goals of the community when making the decision to search for funding to implement the training program. These administrators reported high levels of satisfaction with the extent to which the program had furthered those goals.

Two partner communities offered financial data as a way of comparing the benefits of the First Nations Partnership Programs. Both communities reported providing $17,000 per single student per year when community members moved away to attend university or college. These communities pointed out that their expenditures were often higher than this, because students move their children and sometimes their partners with them. They reported that no more than 30% of community members who

have gone away for education have completed the training (reflecting national rates of First Nations student retention in post-secondary programs). Further, many students who have completed their training have not returned to the community. (The post-secondary administrator in one community noted that there recently appears to be a gradual trend towards more graduates returning home.) Thus, the return on investment of post-secondary funds in terms of capacity built to achieve community development goals was nearly 100% superior in the First Nations Partnership Programs compared to the conventional practice of supporting First Nations students to go away for post-secondary training.

Cross-program comparisons.

Several unanticipated hindrances prevented detailed comparisons of First Nations Partnership Programs with other post-secondary programs. First, post-secondary institutions in Canada cannot require students to identify their race or ethnicity, making it impossible to obtain a reliable count of the number of First Nations students. Second, criteria for identification of individuals as 'First Nations' is itself problematic and controversial, contributing to difficulties in obtaining reliable comparison information. Third, there was no uniformity in how post-secondary programs broke out their budgets or in what they included as part of program delivery and what was supplementary or outside the budget but nevertheless essential for students to complete the program. Fourth, there was reluctance among administrators of other programs to reveal cost information for purposes of program comparisons. Finally, we were able to identify and contact very few First Nations students in Early Childhood Education who had been enrolled in Early Childhood Education and, with the exception of one program, most had not succeeded and were not eager to discuss their experiences.

Thus, the evaluation yielded largely anecdotal evidence of how the First Nations Partnership Programs compared to other post-secondary training programs in Early Childhood Education in terms of costs and benefits. Participants' accounts and available information about other programs enabled a few comparisons, as follows:

(a) The First Nations Partnership Programs were slightly more costly and lengthy than other programs.
(b) The First Nations Partnership Programs were unique in enabling students to achieve university credit for courses culminating in a two-year diploma that laddered into a degree program.
(c) The First Nations Partnership Programs were unique in Canada with regard to the extent of community involvement in program delivery.
(d) No other programs provided opportunities to develop locally relevant capacity through a generated curriculum in which cultural knowledge, community conditions, and locally articulated goals for children's development figured centrally in what students learned and how they were prepared to take on professional roles as leaders in their own communities.
(e) First Nations Partnership Programs outcomes ran against the tide, often described as 'brain drain', which has been abetted by other program delivery approaches. In other programs, students are often required to leave their communities, or to study in isolation from their communities while enrolled in a

local program. When communities financially support students to study in programs that remove them from their communities, either geographically or socially or both, they rarely return to work in their communities. In contrast, 95% of students who completed one or two years in the First Nations Partnership Programs remained in their communities after the program, and most assumed roles in community-based child and family serving program initiatives.

Overall, the lack of visible First Nations people practicing in the field of Early Childhood Education and in other human services areas in Canada suggested that mainstream post-secondary training programs have been largely inaccessible or ineffective in supporting the growth of capacity in First Nations.

The picture that vividly emerged from the evaluation of First Nations Partnership Programs was of a tapestry of interwoven program elements and processes embedded in and actively supported by a community-driven agenda. These mutually enhancing program characteristics and the embeddedness of the program in communities were the most distinguishing features of the First Nations Partnership Programs, compared to other programs of professional training. The impacts of the partnership programs, beginning with individuals and rippling out to the First Nations communities, are the focus of the next section of this report.

Program outcomes.

The program evaluation showed that in all seven partnership programs to date, the Generative Curriculum Model of providing university-accredited training in students' own communities led to unprecedented educational outcomes and vocational outcomes, as well as to personal and community transformations reaching far beyond the classroom.

I. Individual outcomes.

Education.

The findings revealed unprecedented high rates of student retention and completion. Among 118 students across seven programs, 86.4% completed one year of full-time, university-accredited study and 77.3% completed two years of full-time study and achieved a university diploma, compared to completion rates among aboriginal students in two-year post-secondary programs nation-wide of less than 40%.

Sixteen community members who were originally enrolled in the program terminated their studies before completing one year of coursework. Fourteen of these left in the first few weeks of the program. Among the 16 early leavers, four students withdrew due to lack of family support for their involvement in full-time studies; eight students withdrew due to academic challenges; two students withdrew due to pregnancy; and two withdrew due to critical events precipitating their sudden departure from the community.

A recurrent theme emerging in the program evaluation was the congruence that program graduates experienced in a training program that focused on their cultural and geographic community — its goals for the well-being of children and families, socio-

economic circumstances, readiness and strategies for responding to the needs of children and youth. Many students contrasted this with previous experiences in mainstream educational institutions, which they described variously as "totally white," "impractical," "culturally contradictory," "spiritually bankrupt" and "foreign." Because the Generative Curriculum Model adopts a 'both/and' approach that presents Euro-Western theories and research alongside traditions, values and practices of the students' own culture, the curriculum resonated with the realities of their daily lives.

Student transformations.

Positive psychosocial development among students, including those who did not complete the whole two-year program, was one way that participants gauged program effectiveness. Table 7 shows students' ratings of themselves along 11 provided dimensions before and after the two-year training program, indicating positive changes in psychosocial self-concept, cultural involvement, and vocational preparedness.

Table 7. Students perceptions of change: pre- and post-program.

Scale	Mean Rating*
Self-concept as a competent learning	8.81
	4.83
Self-concept as an effective leader	6.93
	4.01
Self-concept as an effective parent	8.65
	5.71
Self-concept as an effective child-care provider	8.88
	5.79
Helping other parents	7.02
	4.48
Clarity of career goals	8.76
	4.28
Job prospects within the community	7.31
	3.94
Job prospects outside the community	7.08
	3.71
Pride in cultural identity	8.42
	6.44
Role in promoting children's cultural identity	7.06
	4.69
Involvement in cultural activities	6.31
	4.71

*Mean rating on a 9-point scale

before	
after	

Parenting effectiveness. Over 80% of program graduates reported that their parenting and grandparenting had improved significantly. Eleven reported sharing new knowledge and skills about child development and their own culture with their adult children, who were now raising their own children. This program impact has particular importance for the partnering First Nations. The communities involved in the four most recent partnerships had a total population of 5,100. A total of 53 students were parents or grandparents to 186 children. Enhanced transmission of knowledge, skills, and enthusiasm about child development and parenting represents a substantial impact on the future of the community as a whole.

A healing journey. Significant psychosocial healing was reported by 92% of the students across the seven programs. Evaluation interviews revealed the extent to which many students had previously internalized negative stereotypes of themselves and their cultural heritage, as well as the extent to which they experienced the First Nations Partnership Programs as a healing journey for themselves and their communities. Many students described feeling more positive about their potential to take control of their own lives and to make valued contributions in their families and communities.

Working through trauma experienced through residential schools was a recurrent theme in the interviews with members of all seven community partners. Many graduates talked about having missed the foundational experiences of being parented effectively. Some had been forced to attend residential schools off-reserve as children; others were raised by parents who had attended residential schools. Many program graduates recounted the re-emergence of painful memories in reflections and group discussions about their own experiences of childhood and of parenting, and in hearing the stories of the Elders. Participants linked the availability of social support within the student cohort, within a 'culturally safe' classroom environment created by the instructors and Elders, and within their own community as an important factor enabling them to make constructive use of recalling childhood traumas in their program of professional development.

II Community outcomes.

Vocational applications.

Certificates and diplomas were not the only or the ultimate criteria that First Nations evaluation participants used to measure program effectiveness. Across all seven programs, they expanded valued program outcomes to include a range of personal and community transformations.

Seventy-eight per cent of students became employed within one year after the program in human service related fields, predominantly in child and family services, while another 11% continued on the education career ladder towards an undergraduate degree. Most important was the fact that 95% of program graduates remained in their communities, in contrast to widely reported 'brain drain' in rural aboriginal communities when community members complete professional training. Retention of program graduates in communities strengthened community capacity to provide culturally appropriate services for children and families. As many evaluation participants noted, there are few, if any, benefits to the community when students either go away to attend

university and do not return — or come back, in the words of an Elder, "as strangers with alien ideas."

Expanded services for children.

The evaluation showed that First Nations Partnership Programs supported community-identified goals for expanded service delivery. As a group, community-based administrators across the seven First Nations Partnership Programs had prioritized three service objectives when they decided to initiate delivery of the child care training program: (a) to provide safe, developmentally supportive care for children; (b) to enable parents to pursue education and employment; (c) to ensure the reproduction and reconstruction of culture through programs for children and families. The community profiles below outline how these objectives were achieved.

Tl'azt'en Nation

Midway through the Tl'azt'en Nation partnership, students became involved in planning the Nation's first child care centre. They were involved in negotiating contracts with a carpentry training program on reserve to create furniture and toys for the facility. They worked together to develop operational policies and procedures. They created curriculum activities to teach young children their traditional Carrier language and to promote positive identity as Tl'azt'enne people. They named the centre Sumyaz (meaning 'Little Star'). Students completed their final practicum at this new centre in their community. All of the program graduates became staff at the centre and also at the Aboriginal Head Start program in an additional facility that they had helped to initiate and implement.

Mount Currie First Nation

The training program ended just one day prior to the official opening of a multiplex that houses two new programs: the Tsipalin (meaning 'Baby Basket') program for infants and toddlers, and the Sqwalx (meaning 'Young Eagle') pre-school program. These services are staffed almost entirely by program graduates who have created opportunities for young children to learn the traditional Lil'wat language, songs, games, dances, drumming and ways of telling and listening to stories of their people and their natural environment.

Meadow Lake Tribal Council

In the five Cree and four Dene communities represented by the Tribal Council, graduates started daycares and other child and family services at their home reserves in remote parts of northern Saskatchewan. Some took up leadership roles in Health and Social Development planning within the offices of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council. One joined the staff of a safe home for women where she introduced programming for children.

Cowichan Tribes

This partnership occurred in a semi-urban environment and was the only program where classes were held on a college campus on reserve land. Graduates applied their training in a variety of locations, including child care and parent support programs, probation services, and college student services. Eight of the original 22 students laddered on to third and fourth years of university study towards a degree, usually in education.

Onion Lake First Nation

Half of the 17 program graduates in this community of 1700 people were hired as staff at child care programs in their villages or as assistants at the community school. One graduate started a new daycare in the main community on reserve at Onion Lake. Ten program graduates continued with First Nations Partnership Programs in a pilot project enabling them to take third and fourth year courses in Child and Youth Care while remaining in their community. Six of these students are expected to achieve a Bachelor of Arts degree within months of the present report. Combining distance learning and face-to-face meetings in classrooms on reserve using the Generative Curriculum Model, these students blazed a new trail for students in other partner communities who may wish to 'ladder' on to the next rung in their career development.

Nzen'man' Child and Family Services

Program graduates are involved in a variety of centre-based and in-home child care programs, and after-school care. Also, in this sparsely populated rural area, graduates are serving First Nations children and families through mobile outreach programs.

Treaty 8 Tribal Association

A range of new daycare and other child- and family-centred programs were started and staffed by graduates from the six villages that comprised the partnership. Included among them is the 'Cree-ative Daycare' at Salteau reserve, emphasizing Cree language and cultural learning in the early years. Continuing the bicultural values underlying the training program, some graduates are involved in English literacy programs to help parents prepare their children for school.

From training to practice.

A question of central interest in the evaluation was how the strong cultural component of the training experience influenced the programs that graduates have created. Observations in centre-based care programs in the communities provided many examples.

- Children's books created in the training program about families in their community, and in their traditional language. ("If you lived in Onion Lake, you would know...")
- The colours and teachings of the Medicine Wheel
- Masks and legends
- Labels in traditional language and in English
- Child-sized drums and group drumming songs

- Traditional crafts such as the making of button blankets, miniature teepees, moccasins, basketry and bead work, including the use of traditional tools and materials
- 'Clan houses' decorated with symbolic animals in the playground
- An emphasis on nature
- An infusion of native spirituality - in stories, art, and ways of describing people and events
- Cradle boards for infants
- Traditional foods, such as bannock, smoked fish, and dried meat
- Organization of children into traditional 'clans' for small group activities
- Creation and use of the traditional talking stick for structuring talking circle time
- The use of 'healing circle talk' to provide for support in response to distressing events
- The use of 'time in' (rather than 'time out') in response to children's challenging behaviours
- Preparing for traditional community events such as powwows
- Learning traditional sustenance activities such as gathering berries, reeds for baskets, and mushrooms, preparing fish, fruits, meats, and leather, following the seasons and rhythms of the community.

Distinctive characteristics in the ways that program graduates approached care giving were frequently noted by practicum supervisors and the evaluation team.

- Flexibility in programming (e.g., in response to the needs of individual parents, children, or caregivers, seasonal variations, unanticipated opportunities)
- Acceptance of a wide range of individual differences among both children and their parents, including a reluctance to label children (e.g., as having 'special needs' or disabilities)
- Non-authoritarian, child-centred approaches to directing children's behaviour in program activities
- Involvement of Elders and parents meaningfully in the life of the centre.

The fluid boundary between the training program and the community meant that when program graduates assumed roles as leaders in child care initiatives, community members such as Elders, parents, and other resource people expected and readily agreed to become actively involved. Eliciting community involvement, and knowing how to integrate community members meaningfully into children's programs are frequently reported challenges for practitioners. These challenges are amplified when the practitioner is not a member of the community, or has completed training away from the community.

Embedding professional practices in community contexts.

There was considerable variability across communities in designs for serving children and youth because every community was culturally different. Each community was embedded in a host of varying socio-economic and geographic conditions. The open architecture of the Generative Curriculum Model is intended to accommodate and respond to new input from each partnering group. The curriculum generated in one

partnership program is not passed along to subsequent partnerships. This would result in the evolution of the kind of pan-aboriginal approach which the instigators of the partnership program at Meadow Lake Tribal Council critiqued as fundamentally misguided. Rather than viewing culturally and contextually appropriate programming as a product, it was experienced in the partnerships as a process in which the particular cultural concepts and forms of each First Nations partner community were elaborated and applied to child and youth care.

Program graduates showed that they were committed to transmitting and sustaining the culture of their community in their practices and responding flexibly to the rhythms and demands of community life. The 'generated concepts and practices' flowing from each training program have not been held up to other communities as "best practice" models or the only ways to ground child care approaches in culture.

Determinants of program success.

Analysis of participants' accounts led to identification of five antecedent conditions that enabled teaching and learning processes leading to program success. The conditions identified most frequently as having a causal link to program outcomes are described in this part of the report. Briefly, they were:

1. Partnership, especially the reciprocal guided participation of willing community and institutional partners.
2. Community-based delivery that enabled community inclusion in all phases of program planning, delivery, and refinement.
3. Student cohort involvement in professional development.
4. Open architecture of curriculum that depended upon community input.
5. Facilitation of cultural input in curriculum.

Participants' accounts suggested that it was the combined effects of these antecedent conditions that account for the success of the partnerships. Together, these conditions enabled the cultural 'fit' and social inclusiveness of the training process and curriculum content. In turn, the training program resulted in outcomes that were consistent with community goals.

1. Partnership.

Community will.

The seven First Nations partners shared certain characteristics that favoured successful partnership:

(a) a pre-existing identification of quality of life for children and families as a priority for community development;
(b) a commitment to preserving the wisdom of Elders and revitalizing culturally-based strengths through policies and programs;
(c) an openness to bicultural or multicultural approaches;
(d) a prior commitment to strengthening capacity to promote well-being among children, youth and families in the community;
(e) geographic proximity to other First Nations communities and willingness to collaborate with them to recruit at least 10 prospective students to form a cohort;

(f) effective community leadership and infrastructure to manage community-based delivery of the program.

It is difficult to gauge how many of the over 500 First Nations in Canada share the characteristics of the 47 villages that were represented in the seven partnership programs. First Nations in Canada vary with respect to their priorities for community development and their receptivity to bicultural initiatives. It is reasonable to assume that not all cultural communities want this type of partnership program or are prepared to take it on. Some First Nations spokespeople have argued for exclusively indigenous curriculum content, constructed and delivered by indigenous institutions, in order to avoid the culturally diluting, assimilationist effects of many policies and programs delivered by non-First Nations institutions.

In the seven partnering communities, community will to invest in training in Early Childhood Care and Development and to subscribe to a bicultural partnership model involving community-based delivery typically took time to evolve. Community administrators described how the momentum for initiating a partnership emerged over a period of years before contact was made with the university-based team. During the initial, pre-program phase of the partnership, community administrators worked hard to inform the community-at-large about the nature and purpose of the program, and to rally support for it while also recruiting eligible community members, Elders and instructors. The seven partnering communities showed that some First Nations have the public will and the social cohesion to take the driver's seat in a program initiative that depends on community participation and a long-term investment.

Institutional will.

Evaluation participants attributed successful partnership in part to a clearly and consistently demonstrated intention on the part of the post-secondary institution to maintain the partnership – referred to here as 'institutional will.' Participants identified the following contributions of institutional partners:

(a) willingness to make changes in policy and procedures in order to accommodate the First Nation. This included:
(b) flexible admission criteria, course registration dates, fees, and procedures;
(c) flexible scheduling of terms to accommodate seasonal community activities including hunting, fishing, and gathering;
(d) flexible course content;
(e) flexible assignment/evaluation procedures;
(f) inclusion of community members in key planning and delivery decisions;
(g) promotion of relations of reciprocity between the institutions and the community;
(h) recognition that First Nations people offer unique and valuable contributions to curriculum development and that no university-based team could effectively contribute this knowledge.

At the outset of the First Nations Partnership Programs, it was understood by the university-based team and the communities that the approach taken by most post-secondary institutions has been flawed by modernist assumptions, including the universal applicability of research-based knowledge about child development and

program evaluations showing 'best practices' without sufficient regard to ecocultural contexts. In contrast, a fundamental strength, as well as a challenge, of the First Nations Partnership Programs was the willingness to suspend judgment – to be willing to not know – both about community values, beliefs and perspectives, and about certain features of the engagement that would evolve or be discovered over time, including:

(a) the way each partnership would develop
(b) precisely what shape the program would take in each partnership
(c) what the content and teaching methods of the program should encompass with regards to culturally specific input.

First Nations communities are linked by certain historical events and current political objectives. Yet they encompass many different realities that reflect tribal ancestry, geographic location, and a host of varying socio-economic conditions. The destinations envisioned by partnering bands and tribal councils in the First Nations Partnership Programs were not identical, and no two programs looked exactly alike. Flexibility on the part of the partnering institutions supported each community's vision of how to use the program to pursue their own goals. For the institution-based teams, there were new learnings with each new partnership about how to act in ways that would support each community's identified goals for capacity building. Similarly, each community had unique requirements and styles of partnering, as well as different ways of understanding the institution's roles and resources. Accountability in the partnerships was as much about the process of engagement as it was about the content of the training curriculum.

2. **Community-based delivery: Closing the gap between education and community.**

Community participants explained that for many people in rural settings, 'distance education' is really the opposite of how it is conventionally defined by educators. In rural communities, 'distance education' occurs when students have to leave their families and the sources of knowledge in their communities – travelling distances in order to access generic education and training programs that often have little applicability to the migrant student's realities back home. Using the Generative Curriculum Model, education is both spatially and socially 'closer to home', keeping students in close proximity to cultural knowledge and support in their own ecologies.

Community-based delivery enabled extensive community involvement and other program processes that combined to distinguish the Generative Curriculum Model from 'good, constructivist, participatory pedagogy.' Instructors at mainstream campuses who were asked to comment on the model and compare it to their own teaching experiences pointed to the difficulty of 'doing' generative curriculum in programs where students are at a distance from their home communities. When capacity-building initiatives through education and training are arranged so that the community is excluded from participating, the potential for community-wide transformations that could sustain and magnify the capacity that is built is seriously attenuated.

A comparative view of varying educational terrains came sharply into focus through the evaluation project. The absence of community in traditional university education, and the exclusion of community even in some programs that are physically

located in the community, create major challenges for making professional training relevant. Students are not practicing with and receiving input and feedback from the people who they are training to serve. In the partnership programs, many program graduates explained the positive impacts of the training on their own parenting with reference to the fact that they did not need to leave their families in order to participate in the program, enabling ongoing opportunities for practice, feedback, and reflection on

The challenge to be 'seen.'

The greatest challenge arising from basing the university program in the communities was that the program was not visible to the on-campus teaching, learning and administrative community in the partnering institution. First Nations student participation in the two-year program of course work represented a large proportion of the First Nations students enrolled at the University of Victoria. However, their absence from the on-campus community appears to have been more salient than their presence as members of the university community beyond the walls of traditional classrooms.

3. Student cohort involvement.

Many program graduates identified the high level of personal support that they experienced throughout the program as an enabling condition for persevering with full-time studies to program completion. They also accounted for their personal and professional development largely with reference to the support they experienced as they underwent significant change. Regular meetings of a group of students moving through the program together, alongside instructors-in-residence and Elders, led to essential characteristics of the learning environment, including:

(a) a climate of cultural safety for self-exploration and open debate about concepts of child care;
(b) reliable support for students as they worked through memories of childhood stresses and loss of cultural identity and ventured out into practica;
(c) sustainable social and professional networks.

Students, instructors, and Elders became the centre of a community of learners that was characterized and enhanced by familiarity, proximity, and shared experiences. Among program graduates, classmates were the most frequently identified sources of support, followed by instructors and intergenerational facilitators. In one community, the intergenerational facilitator twice intervened with a 'time out' from regular classes and assignments so that students, Elders and instructors could hold healing circles and sweat lodge ceremonies to promote recovery from residential school trauma and other personal and interpersonal difficulties. Students and instructors frequently compared the cohort to a 'family.' In all seven partnerships, social cohesion was significantly enhanced as a result of cohort involvement in a co-constructed, community-focused experience of personal and social transformation and professional development.

Challenges associated with one-time delivery.

One-time delivery of the program meant that all students needed to succeed and move through the program together. While this had a motivating effect overall, when a student failed a particular course, it was a challenge to find ways for the student to meet

the course requirement at a later date. This situation was resolved using a 'learning contract' negotiated by the student, instructor, and university or college-based team, and carried out during the program follow-up phase.

4. 'Open Architecture' Curriculum.

Course content in the first two partnerships adopted a spiral structure, with the idea that material generated through student–instructor interaction and through Elders' contributions would be incorporated into successive course offerings. Formative evaluation of these initial partnerships led to the conclusion that this spiral model focused too narrowly on knowledge creation as an output. Also, it risked leading to the same kind of pan-aboriginal representations which had been rejected by the initial partners in the Meadow Lake Tribal communities. Finally, every First Nations partner group expressed reluctance to pass on their own cultural knowledge to other groups or to the university.

The more recent five partnership programs (1995-1999) were iterative: each partnership generated a curriculum that was conceived through interaction among community members about their own culture and about the ideas presented in the course materials provided by the university-based team. Many evaluation participants observed that the process of constructing the curriculum had more impact and value for the community than the product. As one instructor remarked: "It was a lived curriculum." Nonetheless, cultural knowledge that was reconstructed and elaborated through the participatory curriculum development process was preserved through journals, books, audio- and video-tapes for purposes internal to each community.

Participatory teaching and learning.

Instructors recruited by partner communities agreed at the outset not to replicate the 'expert-driven' framework of most mainstream training and development assistance programs, nor to preordain exactly where the journey of generating curriculum would lead. Accounts given in the evaluation by 19 instructors, each of whom had taught in one of the seven partnership programs, underscored how their teaching had differed in fundamental ways from prevailing teaching approaches in universities and professional training programs. As a way to capture these differences, the instructors were asked to formulate 'advice' for future instructors using the Generative Curriculum Model, based on their reflections on what was effective in their own teaching practices in the partnership programs. Recurring themes are noted below.

(a) Respect the cultural and historical experience of community members as valuable sources of knowledge, rather than elevating as singular the authority of Euro-Western theories and research.
(b) Assert the power of 'not knowing' where an informed discussion might lead, rather than maintaining the colonialist presumption of 'knowing' what is true and best for all people, and relying on pre-packaged curricula developed by 'experts.'
(c) Ground teaching and learning in consideration of many viewpoints, rather than relying principally on the modernist approach of 'universal' truths and 'best practices' in human services.
(d) Encourage participation and promote social inclusion in building human service capacity, rather than accepting the exclusivity that has often been imposed by

professional 'gate-keeping' organizations and by 'dominant' cultures on 'minority' cultures.

5. Facilitation of cultural input: Bridging the worlds of academe and indigenous knowledge.

Instructors cited Elders' participation in curriculum development and teaching as the catalyst both for new and rekindled intergenerational relationships and for reinstatement of traditional social structures that ensure cultural transmission. In First Nations communities, Elders are typically the main source of knowledge of traditional ways of supporting children and families. In all seven First Nations Partnership Programs, Elders contributed portions of the content of each course. At the same time, they modeled ways of story telling, listening, and learning that are themselves expressions of First Nations culture.
Instructors reported staying alert in every course for opportunities to:

(a) involve Elders in teaching activities;
(b) integrate teachings gleaned from Elders into the course work;
(c) encourage students to reflect on Elders' words throughout their discussions, assignments, and practicum activities.

Students attributed several program experiences to the central role of Elders, including:

(a) developing a personal relationship with an Elder, often for the first time;
(b) receiving emotional support and practical guidance from Elders;
(c) acquiring knowledge from Elders about their culture of origin, traditional language, and socio-historical roots.

Challenge: Variations in Elders' availability and cultural knowledge.

"We have no healthy community members over 50 years old."
"Our old people all attended residential school and as a result they don't know the culture and have forgotten the language."
"Most of the Elders here were converted to Christianity and that is what they are likely to want to teach us."

These concerns were voiced by members of two community partners during their exploration of the 'goodness of fit' between the Generative Curriculum Model and their own community goals and resources. While representatives of these two communities were convinced that mainstream training programs were not culturally sensitive or applicable to their communities, they were initially at a loss as to where community-specific, traditional cultural input for the curriculum could come from.

The university-based team also had doubts about whether a co-constructive process, intended to embody elements of the traditional culture of the partner communities,was feasible in these cases. However, agreements were negotiated to deliver the program, and to begin by bringing in guest speakers from beyond the communities, including First Nations authors and Elders who were well known in the

region. Eventually, students suggested inviting their elderly relatives, and gradually other Elders in the community began to offer workshops on traditional crafts, language, and ceremonies. By the time these programs ended, graduation halls were filled with community members, including many Elders, who had participated in the programs.

Thus, the partnership programs varied with regard to the extent of Elders' involvement. Analysis of participants' accounts suggested that high levels of Elders' involvement in the program were primarily associated with greater pre-program social cohesion within the community as well as greater community awareness and organization for supporting the partnership program. However, communities with initially low Elder participation grew in social cohesion and cultural pride as a result of their efforts to revitalize active roles for Elders in program activities.

Challenge: Cultural diversity within student cohorts.

In three partnership programs, low cohesion among students at the beginning of the program seemed to be associated with low Elder involvement and more dissatisfaction with what Elders contributed. Initially low student cohesion occurred when there was greater diversity among students with regards to their First Nations culture of origin. In these programs, where students came from several different cultural and language communities, it became clear that Elders must be recruited from each of these different First Nations groups. It was also essential that students developed positive rapport with each other, so that learning about each others' First Nations culture became important to them.

Intergenerational facilitation.

The passing of wisdom from one generation to another — even in a First Nations context where this is a tradition — does not happen automatically. The program evaluation revealed the pivotal role played by an Intergenerational Facilitator for enabling 'generative curriculum', promoting reinstatement of traditional teaching and learning roles, and stimulating social cohesion. This role was filled by someone who was well situated to elicit the active involvement of a broad network of Elders to participate in the program. In two partnership programs, this individual was an Elder themselves, and was widely respected as knowledgeable about the culture with regards to child care and development. In addition to liaising with Elders who participated in the program, and contributing knowledge themselves, this individual played an important role in helping some students (and in two instances, instructors) to overcome their initial resistance to the unfamiliar practice of putting indigenous knowledge at the core of curriculum development. Some students reported that they were receptive and welcoming of Elders as co-constructors of the curriculum. But others reported that they had strong doubts about whether the 'old ways' could have any value or relevance to themselves, their families, or their future careers in child and youth care. Many students and instructors described the importance of being able to discuss Elders' contributions with the Intergenerational Facilitator, who was especially adept at helping students to tolerate ambiguities in the Elders' often indirect method of teaching through story telling.

The Intergenerational Facilitator served as a kind of socio-cultural informant for instructors who were not from the community, and helped to introduce instructors and

Elders to one another. The evaluation suggested that an Intergenerational Facilitator role could be an effective innovation in other community-inclusive training initiatives that seek to bridge the worlds of mainstream academe and indigenous communities.

A strong cultural identity and positive self-esteem are important foundations for working effectively as a human service practitioner. The evaluation research showed how the involvement of Elders, with the support of the Intergenerational Facilitators, brought all students, even the most disenchanted, into a circle of belonging to a cultural community.

Discussion

The evaluation research yielded evidence of individual and community-wide impacts that are unprecedented in published reports of post-secondary aboriginal education initiatives in Canada. The program evaluation revealed many expected and unexpected positive outcomes when professional training is seen as a tool for:

(a) retention and completion of aboriginal students in post-secondary education;
(a) application of professional training in community relevant vocations;
(b) personal transformation;
(c) cultural revitalization;
(d) community development;
(e) institutional change.

Despite considerable differences among the First Nations partners in terms of their infrastructure, location, culture, economic status, and existing services for children and families, all of the partnerships yielded unprecedented successes for students, for the communities, and for the institution-based teams. The evaluation shows that post-secondary education can be delivered in communities as small and distant from the partnering university as Tl'azt'en Nation, with an on-reserve population of about 600 people in three villages nestled in wilderness. And it worked as well, though differently, in the larger, semi-urban setting of the Cowichan Tribes, co-located with one university-college partner and within an hour of the other university partner.

Yet, as this report has already identified, challenges arose in every partnership. Challenges ranged from initial difficulties recruiting a sufficient number of students and initial skepticism about the feasibility and value of involving Elders in classes, to extreme initial difficulties securing funding to mount the program. There is much to be learned from how challenges were addressed in each partnership.

It is likely that the Generative Curriculum Model is applicable to a range of cultural communities in North America and internationally, and to a range of professional training fields. There are, however, limitations to the applicability of the program in its present form. In particular, the program cannot be mounted in very small and isolated communities where student numbers do not make the investment financially feasible and where students have no local access to practicum settings with skilled supervision. The cost-effectiveness of the program, in its current form, depends upon having at least 10 students enroll in the program. Many communities that have

inquired about implementing the program have been too small to recruit, support, and eventually employ this number of students.

Implications for reconceptualizing professional training.

What can be done to sustain and extend this kind of socially-inclusive, generative approach to extending the reach and relevance of professional training in cultural communities? Recommendations for future steps are discussed in this part of the report.

The evaluation findings are only as useful as there are willing "users" who are positioned to make a difference in how we think about the lives of children and families in communities. It is not First Nations communities who have most to learn from the insights yielded by the evaluation research, but the educational and development assistance institutions, policy-making bodies and agencies – both First Nations and non-First Nations – which are involved in establishing and enforcing criteria for funding and delivering professional training in human services.

Being responsive to indigenous communities means more than letting community members voice their concerns or preferences, more than acknowledging diversity, and more than arranging a welcoming environment on mainstream campuses to accommodate indigenous students who are able to come to them. Educators need to open up the foundations of how training programs are conceived and delivered, how they are funded, and how communities can play leading roles in capacity-building initiatives.

What does it take to be an effective partner with cultural communities?

Administrators who participated in the evaluation addressed a set of attitudes and forms of interpersonal engagement.

(a) Tolerate high levels of uncertainty and shared control of the program.
(b) Clarify and confirm informally, and later formally, agreement about the 'mission' of the partnership and the core elements of the program.
(c) Make a long-term commitment and persevere.
(d) Respond to expressions of community needs regarding program implementation with a high level of flexibility. Post-secondary partners need to be self-critical and willing to jettison the 'excess baggage' of their institutions and work around some of the constraints of their institutions.
(e) Become familiar with the priorities, practices, and circumstances of the community, without becoming involved in them. (In the First Nations Partnership Programs, the post-secondary partners did not seek or presume to become experts or insiders of the cultures or social life of the community partners.)
(f) Assume an encouraging, non-directive stance while waiting.
(g) Avoid 'doing' when non-action would be more productive of community agency and, ultimately, capacity building.
(h) Be receptive to what the community brings to the project, although these contributions may come in unfamiliar forms and at unexpected times.

Institutional commitment.

The most serious challenge facing this program approach is that it remains at the margins of mainstream university and government priorities. This challenge persists despite a decade of documented successes and appeals from both First Nations communities wishing to mount the program and post-secondary institutions wishing to respond to these communities through partnerships.

A specific financial challenge for both communities and partnering institutions is the length of time needed to develop community and institutional will, establish a partnership relationship and negotiate formal agreements, deliver the program, and provide follow-up support for program participants. As community and institutional administrators underscored in this evaluation, the importance of the pre-program delivery phase cannot be underestimated. Yet, funding for education and employment training is typically available only for the period of formal program delivery when students are enrolled in courses. Across partnerships, the program lasts approximately 23 months. This represents no more than one-half of the time invariably needed to bring a successful partnership program to fruition.

The First Nations Partnership Programs effectively broke new ground with the open architecture of the Generative Curriculum Model. The evaluation shows that universities and colleges can effectively reach beyond the walls of on-campus structures and respond flexibly to communities that recognize education as an important tool for social and economic development. The challenge remaining is how to go beyond the open architecture of the Generative Curriculum Model to an open architecture in the pedagogical and administrative structures comprising post-secondary institutions as a whole. One way institutions could start to manifest a new vision would be to show substantial support for off-campus programs that are receptive to community initiative and inclusion in program delivery and curriculum design.

First Nations Partnership Programs demonstrates the benefits that can flow when partners recognize the need to anchor capacity-building initiatives deeply within the context of the local people, their existing social organization and cultural strengths, their potential for transformation, and their will to move forward on internally articulated agendas. Many human service training and program initiatives at both individual and community levels proceed on the basis of the assumption that the more chronically oppressed or needy a group of people seems to be, the more one must bring to the situation in order to be helpful. The evaluation of the First Nations Partnership Programs shows the opposite.

To be supportive of community efforts to strengthen capacity, institutional partners and community leaders themselves must be scrupulous about not being pre-emptive and not overwhelming the community with imported 'goods and services' from outside their own context and out of step with their own internal rhythm and pace. Rather than evoking the potential in any community for passive receptivity and eventual dependency, capacity- building initiatives must capitalize upon the community's agency.

While not conceived within the crucible of post-modernism, the impetus for the partnerships in the desire of the Meadow Lake Tribal Council to present students with "the best of both worlds" so that they could construct their own truths and "walk in both

worlds" implies a post- modernist acceptance of multiple ways of knowing, sources of knowledge, and criteria for evaluating the validity and utility of knowledge (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999). The Generative Curriculum Model resonates with an increasingly influential shift in education from essentialist to feminist (Lather, 1991) and from logical positivist to sociocultural constructivist ideologies (Kessler & Swadener, 1992; Wertsch & Toma, 1995).

Most importantly, students, instructors, elders, and community administrators emphasized that their experience with the 'both/and' framework of the 'Generative Curriculum Model' enabled them to ensure that their own culture was represented both in the curriculum content and in the teaching and learning process. As a result, the training program resonated with the realities of the communities in which they lived and intended to work. Dennis Esperanz, a First Nations educator who played a key role in implementing the partnership program with Onion Lake First Nation commented:

> *We educators have to be visionaries, and when we talk curriculum, there has to be a view to what our communities are envisioning – what their goals are. The Generative Curriculum Model contains a larger vision of how to bring these two different visions together – the one that academics see and the one that guides people out there in the communities. So we've learned a new approach to making what we do here [in this institution] meaningful and effective for all parties. People are just starting to understand what this is all about.*

The evaluation research provides strong support for involving communities in co-constructing curricula in order to achieve three related objectives:

1. increasing retention and academic success among aboriginal students in post secondary education;
2. ensuring the cultural relevance and vocational utility of professional training within the context of the needs and internally-identified goals of aboriginal communities; and
3. decreasing the socio-political hegemony of mainstream academic canons and pedagogical approaches by recognizing alternative criteria for evaluating the validity and worth of diverse sources and ways of knowing.

The curriculum innovation described in this report illustrates how we can re-position mainstream educational institutions to respond effectively to aboriginal student groups and to other cultural communities in ways that avoid the pitfalls of colonizing assimilationist tendencies of many modernist educational practices. Generative curriculum development begins with ensuring that the privilege of knowledge is diffused. Inviting community members as collaborators in co-constructing curricula, and placing culturally embedded constructs at the core, rather than at the periphery, of education, has profound implications for educators. This approach affects the kinds of questions we ask about our roles as educators; the curriculum designs we use; the ways we assess the value of education and training; and the kinds of relationships we forge as educators with diverse cultural constituencies. All aspects of the education process and outcomes are affected, therefore constituting an alternative paradigm.

Summary

Seven Canadian aboriginal communities initiated partnerships with a university-based team to co-construct curriculum using a 'Generative Curriculum Model' and to co-deliver a community-based training program leading to certification in Early Childhood Education and a university diploma in Child and Youth Care. The effectiveness of this participatory, constructivist, community-involving model of curriculum design was demonstrated in program evaluation research completed in July 2000. Positive program impacts included: unprecedented high rates of aboriginal student retention, program completion, leadership, and application of training to relevant vocations within their communities; revitalization of intergenerational relationship through involvement of tribal elders in curriculum construction, teaching and learning; enhanced community cohesion; and reinforcement of valued cultural concepts and practices. The benefits of decolonizing post-secondary education by providing a place of value in curriculum design and delivery to cultural knowledge transmitted by community members alongside the established canon of knowledge in mainstream training programs were discussed.

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